



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207
Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

Name of Proposal: DNS 15-046: SOUTH FORK COWICHE CREEK FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION PROJECT

Description of Proposal:

The YKFP proposal for South Fork Cowiche Creek identified approximately 2 miles for wood replenishment and riparian enhancement on the Cowiche unit of WDFW's Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Restoration measures are to reverse channel incision and restore floodplain function. The goals of the project are to enhance instream habitat complexity and groundwater storage, which will in turn contribute toward improved flows. This project will provide additional benefits to fish and wildlife by increasing minimum stream flows, restoring the density and species composition of riparian vegetation, increasing the availability of pool habitat and cool water refugia during periods of high temperature, and providing suitable habitat for beaver re-colonization.

Wood is a critical component of stream ecosystems. The project will install wood structures to restore in-channel complexity, reverse channel incision and reengage Cowiche Creek with its floodplain. Log structures can be cost-effective applications that reduce stream velocities at high flows, thereby trapping sediment to help reverse channel incision. Wood will also be placed on the floodplain to promote roughness during floods. Fine material will be trapped which will promote seed germination, and provide microclimate heterogeneity for riparian re-vegetation. Floodplain roughness also helps avoid rapid channel avulsions that would otherwise hamper floodplain restoration.

Floodplain and aquatic restoration will require 882 logs to be placed in the channel and floodplain. Wood for the project will be harvested in the Oak Creek watershed. Timber harvest sites were previously identified in the Oak Creek Floodplain Restoration Project (DNS 14-048), however the method of harvest and tree removal has changed. Timber harvest operations will be conducted with ground based equipment on slopes < 45%. Trees will be whole tree logged and processed at the landings. Normal ground disturbance from a tractor yarder will occur. Logging slash at landings will be piled and burned and/or distributed along skid trails. Trees will be left in lengths as long as possible and hauled via truck to the Cowiche worksite.. After construction, the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) will install cuttings along disturbed banks and broadcast native grass-seed.

Proposed restoration includes the construction of unanchored log jams in the stream channel (with and without rootwads) and placed via cable yarder (Link Belt 98 or equivalent – a tracked, lattice crane with 54-foot boom). Pilings (vertical logs) will be driven into the bank using a 100-class tracked excavator with hydraulic hoepack to encourage flows into disconnected wide floodplain areas where riparian vegetation is absent. Logs may be positioned individually or in small groupings. Small diameter woody material will be placed by laborers as racking material upstream of and within each jam. In addition, logs will be placed in the floodplain to enhance roughness and trap fine material during floods, in turn rejuvenating soil health and promoting

native plant germination. All wood placements will be consistent with the Oregon State Guide to Placement of Wood, Boulders and Gravel for Habitat Restoration (2010) and Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines (2012).

Proponent/Applicant:

Primary

Kelly Clayton
YN YKFP Habitat Biologist
PO Box 151
Toppenish, WA 98948
(509) 945-7195
clak@yakamfish-nsn.gov

Secondary

Ross Huffman
WDFW Oak Creek W.A. Manager
16601 US Hwy 12
Naches, WA 98937
(509) 653-2390
ross.huffman@dfw.wa.gov

Location of Proposal, including street, if any: Cowiche Creek is a right bank tributary to the Naches River. The project reach is located on the Cowiche unit of the WDFW's Oak Creek Wildlife Area near Yakima, Yakima County, Washington: Township 14N, Range 16E, Sections 34 and 35.

Lead Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law¹ does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.² We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on September 15, 2015.**

Method of Comment:

The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

Responsible Official: Lisa Wood


Position/Title: SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

Address: 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.¹

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Lisa Wood at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2260.

DATE OF ISSUE: September 1, 2015

SIGNATURE: 

Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 15-046.dns